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BIRMINGHAM UNIVERSITY
FIELD ARCHAEOLOGY UNIT

LITTLE WESTON MOAT

Shropshire

Monument Survey and Restoration 1989

B.U.F.A.U.



LITTLE WESTON MOAT, CHIRBURY, SHROPSHIRE

O.S. Map Ref: SO 2960 9875, Shropshire County SMR No.1217

County Monument SAM: 310

Report on Survey and Restoration Works 1988-89

Introduction

Little Weston Moat is situated 400 metres north-east of Little Weston, Chirbury, Salop. The moated site and adjacent related? earthworks are currently in a fairly good state of preservation (Figs. 1 and 2). The moat and platform area measure c. 55 x 65 metres. The ditch (14 metres wide in places) is partly silted up and waterlogged for much of the year. The platform (c. 20 x 20 metres) is heavily overgrown by scrub, which also extends over the north and east sectors of the moat.

To the east of the moated area are the earthworks of what appear to be two semi-waterlogged fishponds, the most westerly apparently draining into the moat. To the south west of the moated area are further earthworks which may indicate another fishpond. Most of these ancilliary areas are under permanent pasture and are grazed by sheep and cattle, the eastern side of the moat being slightly eroded as a result. Woodland scrub and some mature trees partly cover the eastern fishpond earthworks.

Amateur excavations directed by the Rev. J. Davies took place on the moat platform in the early 1970's, apparently without Scheduled Monument consent or the publication of any adequate account. A stone-set and lined hearth was exposed, along with drystone walls on the northern and eastern sides of the platform.

Pottery, a silver coin, roof slates, fixing nails, lead sheet, iron objects and animal bone were discovered according to a local source (Mrs. R. Cunningham, Little Weston Farm) but their present whereabouts are unknown. The coin was dated to c.1430 and the pottery was apparently consistent with this date.

These excavations were not back-filled at the cessation of work, resulting in the progressive erosion and invasion by undergrowth of exposed areas of masonry, etc.

Project Brief

As a result of these circumstances, Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit was commissioned by the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission (England) in 1988 to undertake a complete survey and some repair/maintenance work on the monument. This involved:-

- a. Preparation of a 1:100 survey plan of the moated enclosure and related earthworks.
- b. Preparation of a 1:20 plan of the area on the moat platform excavated during the 1970s.
- c. Infilling of 1970's trenches using material derived from an existing spoil heap.
- d. Cutting down of trees growing from exposed masonry.

Project Summary

Early in August 1988 a field team including members of an MSC funded project from B.U.F.A.U. commenced work on the 1:100 survey, beginning with the earthworks adjacent to the moat. Regrettably, this was shortly curtailed by the landowner, who refused to sanction operations extending beyond the area of the moated platform. Attempts were then made by H.B.M.C. to persuade the owner (Mr. J. Brook) to reconsider his attitude, but these proved ultimately unsuccessful.

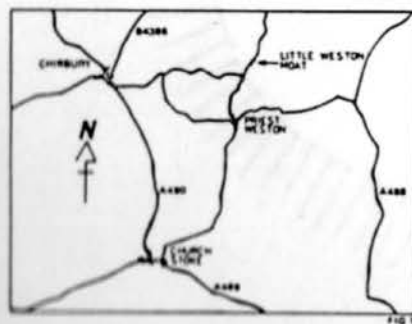
Eventually, a more restricted survey and restoration project was agreed between B.U.F.A.U. and Mr. Brook, and this was undertaken in February 1989. This phase of the project involved members of the permanent B.U.F.A.U. field team (E. Newton, L. Jones and J. Sterenberg) monitored by P. Leach, MSC-funded support being no longer available.

A plan of the area exposed by the earlier excavations was prepared (Fig. 3), locating those archaeological features still visible and certain other current elements of the site, including trees and recent trench collapse. Small trees and some undergrowth growing out from areas of exposed masonry were removed, although it was not possible to clear a larger tree which had collapsed immediately north of the most northerly trench without further disturbance to the monument.

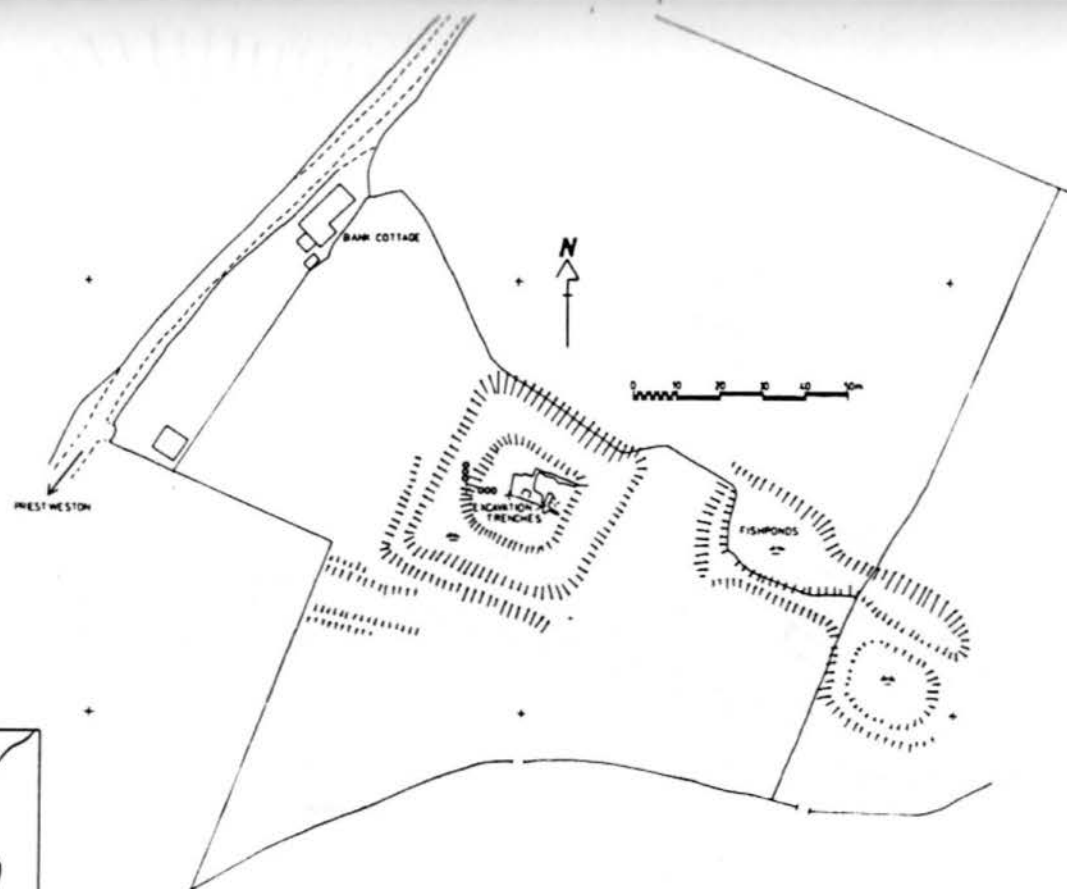
All exposed faces of masonry representing structural walls revealed in the excavation trenches were backfilled with soil and rubble derived from an original excavator's spoil heap to the west. The remaining areas of excavation were for the most part adequately masked by subsequent grass and undergrowth cover and were not backfilled further.

No attempt was made to extend the survey works beyond the moat platform, in accordance with the landowner's condition of consent. The density of undergrowth beyond the area of former excavations made further detailed survey of the platform and surrounding moat almost impossible, particularly without the facility of access beyond the bounds of the moat.

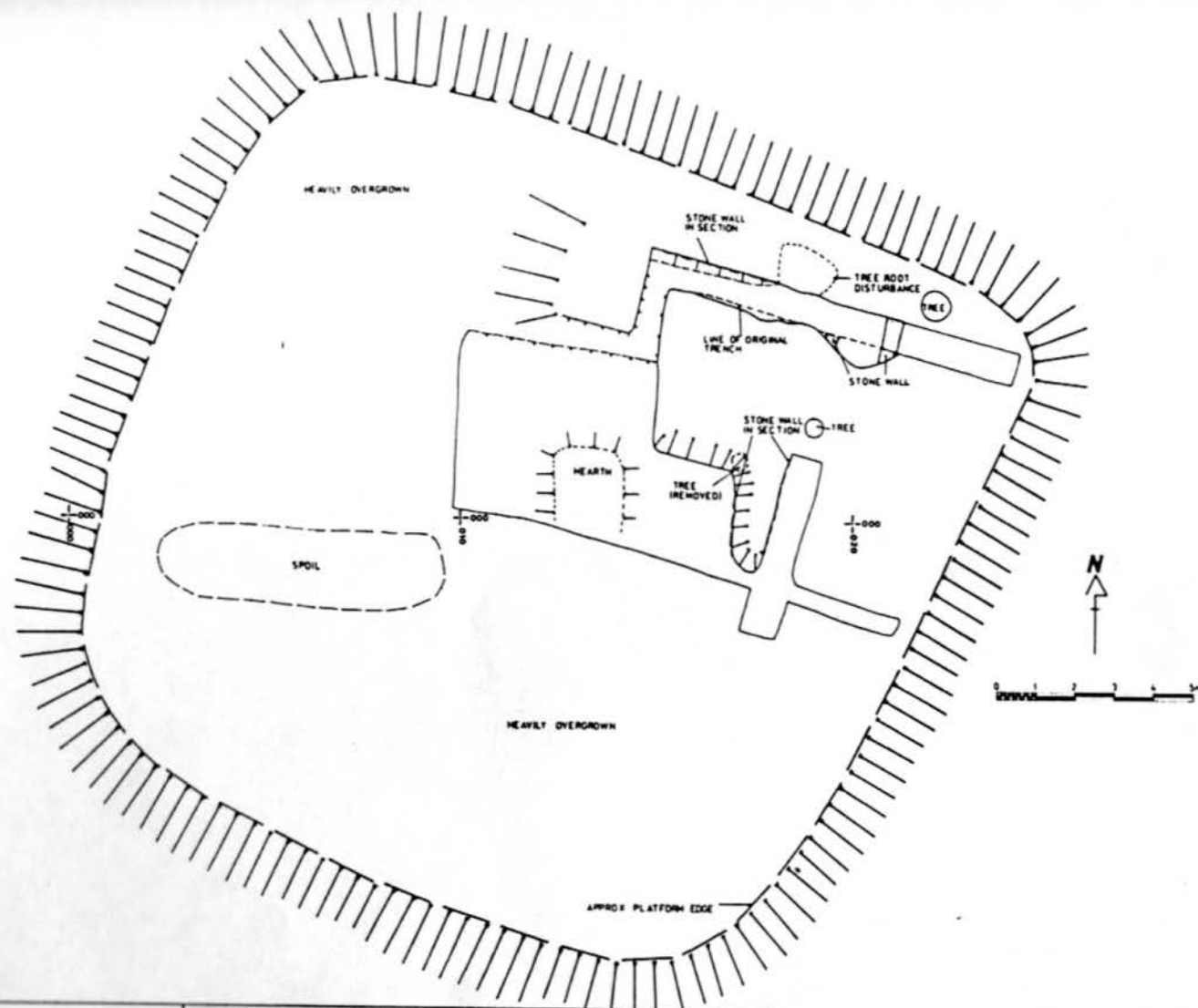
L. Jones, P.J. Leach
March 1989



LOCATION PLAN FIG. 1
 SITUATION IN RELATION TO SITE PLAN 1:000 FIG. 2



**LITTLE WESTON MOAT
 CHIRBURY
 SALOP**



PLAN OF 1978 EXCAVATIONS 180 FMS

**LITTLE WESTON MOAT
CHIRBURY
SALOP**